

CAPITOL UPDATE 2012

SUPPORTING VETERANS

Desecrating Veterans’ Memorials

Honoring the present and past sacrifices of our veterans is one of my highest priorities. It is shocking to see an increase in thefts and vandalism of veterans’ memorials. We increased penalties for desecrating veterans’ memorials beyond the monetary value of what was vandalized.

Diversionsary Programs for Vets with PTSD & Legal Issues

So many of our service men and women return home and face a variety of challenges, not the least of which are legal issues and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. A federally funded pilot program for veterans dealing with these issues is helpful but limited, so we expanded the program to more locations throughout the state.

Custody Orders While on Deployment

In order to reduce the psychological trauma a parent feels when they leave a small child for an extended period of time, we protected parents’ permanent custody orders in the event of deployment. We provided an opportunity for the military parent to create temporary custody orders that remain in effect only as long as they are away on deployment and for as much contact as possible between children and the parent who is absent while on military duty by providing contact by phone or email.

CT Veterans Charity Network

Fraudulent charity groups often misrepresent veterans, trying to take advantage of our good will toward those who serve our country. We helped protect consumers from these fraudulent groups by creating a legitimate charities list on the Department of Veterans’ Affairs website.

Accountability and Transparency in Elections

We need to keep special interests out of our electoral process and maintain the integrity of our public finance system. In a time where rich special interests can have too much influence in elections this legislation looks to makes sure corporate money does not flood campaigns.

In Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010) the Supreme Court held that the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prohibited the government from restricting independent political expenditures by corporations. The decision has led to the proliferation of corporate donations and of so-called Super PACs – which dispense millions of dollars to influence voters without disclosing the names of their donors.

In response to this ill-advised ruling, here in Connecticut we looked to modify state election laws affecting campaign finance and the Citizens’ Election Program. The bill requires any entity – whether PAC or corporation - making an independent campaign-related expenditure or independent political ad to list the names of their top donors.



Dear Neighbor,

From jobs to education to improved response to natural disasters, the legislature helped citizens across our state in many ways in 2012.

It started last October when we passed comprehensive, bipartisan jobs legislation that invested hundreds of millions of dollars in small businesses, gave firms hiring incentives, aligned education programs with jobs-in-demand, encouraged entrepreneurship and innovation, and eliminated red-tape for growing companies.

This spring, we balanced a budget by keeping our funding promise to cities and towns without raising taxes. Historic changes were made to our educational system so our children can succeed. We made it easier for people to exercise voting rights, demanded that utility companies respond better when storms and crises hit, and further protected victims of domestic violence.

Along the way, we gave new hope to those suffering from debilitating illnesses by legalizing medical marijuana and helped children with special needs by improving Individualized Education Plans and creating a study on workforce development, training and employment of young adults with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities.

I hope this report is informative. I’m happy to answer any questions about these issues or any others facing our state or your family. Together we can create a better future for our families.

Sincerely,



State Representative

BRYAN HURLBURT

State Representative
Bryan Hurlburt
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Capitol: 800-842-8267
In District: 860-454-8002
www.housedems.ct.gov/Hurlburt

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD, CT
Permit No. 3937

JOBS & ECONOMY

Jobs are Priority #1

We continued the state's commitment to job growth and economic recovery with new legislation during special session that expands the Small Business Express Program, allowing an estimated 3,600 additional businesses to have access to state funding. The program allows small businesses to access much-needed funding for capital investments and hiring. In addition, the bill:

- Establishes the Unemployed Armed Forces Member STEP-UP program with grants to subsidize a business's cost of hiring unemployed veterans during their first 180 days on the job.
- Creates the "Connecticut Made" and "Connecticut Treasures" programs to promote products made in Connecticut and promote the state's cultural, educational and historic attractions.
- Develops a plan to allow the state to give preferential incentives and economic development assistance to companies that will relocate jobs from overseas to Connecticut.

We created new job opportunities for young people by funding the Youth Employment Summer Jobs program, and expanded adult evening education programs.

Additional high level job opportunities will result from economic development funding for the Jackson Labs project that builds upon our decision to become a world leader in bioscience and biotechnology.

Price Gouging & Pain at the Pump

Skyrocketing gasoline prices are a result of global factors such as growing demand from expanding economies such as China, turmoil in the Middle East and oil market speculators. Faced with the reality of a global dilemma, the legislature acted in a bipartisan manner to be a part of the solution, by capping the state petroleum gross receipts tax (GRT) on motor fuels and enacting new price gouging laws to protect consumers from oil companies and gasoline dealers that try to exploit abnormal market conditions for profit.



State Representative
Bryan Hurlburt
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Capitol: 800-842-8267
In District: 860-454-8002
www.housedems.ct.gov/Hurlburt

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Storm Response and Power Outages

Prior to the start of the 2012 legislation session, I committed to pushing new laws to hold utility companies more accountable for their performance before, during and after storms. So, in the aftermath of the October Nor'easter and Tropical Storm Irene that left much of the state without power, some in northeast Connecticut for over two weeks, I sponsored sweeping reforms to better prepare for future severe storms and avoid wide-spread and lengthy loss of utility service, where:

- Utilities will be held to minimum performance standards for emergency preparation and response.
- Noncompliance could result in penalties of up to 2.5 percent of an electric or gas company's annual distribution revenue, approximately \$25 million in the case of Connecticut Light & Power.

Mother Nature is unpredictable and last fall's double dose of her wrath was certainly one for the history books. That experience led to this legislation and should leave us much bettered prepared when the next big one hits.

Open Space

A new law requires the DEEP commissioner to update the state's open space plan by December 15, 2012 and at least once every five years thereafter. The plan must include among other things: An estimate of how much state land is preserved as open space, and potential methods, costs and benefits of establishing a system to accurately track open space. There is also a requirement for the commissioner of DEEP, in consultation with all state agencies, to identify state owned land that should be conserved and develop a plan to preserve it forever as open space land, by October 1, 2014.

Hurricane Deductibles

This legislation protects homeowners by prohibiting insurers from applying hurricane deductibles if a hurricane is downgraded to a tropical storm before it strikes Connecticut. This is a response to complaints from consumers who were charged large hurricane deductibles for property damage caused by Tropical Storm Irene after it was downgraded from a hurricane before entering the state in August 2011.



Rep. Hurlburt with constituent Catherine Britschock during Special Education Day at the Capitol

State Representative BRYAN HURLBURT

Ashford, Tolland & Willington | www.housedems.ct.gov/hurlburt

Seniors

- **Medicare Eligibility Preserved** – ensures that thousands of seniors and people with disabilities can continue to use the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to help pay for their Medicare co-pays and deductibles. The legislation, which passed unanimously, raises the income limit for the MSP in order to accommodate a 3.6 percent Social Security cost of living increase (COLA) which took effect January 1. It would have been a tragic irony if a welcome increase in Social Security benefits caused Connecticut residents to become ineligible for these Medicare benefits.
- **Hospice Care Improves** - with just two licensed hospices in the state, this new law will permit smaller local hospice facilities the opportunity to provide high quality services that allow patients to stay closer to family and friends. This bill will help our state to ensure that residents have access to health care services across the full continuum of care.

Education Reform

Our education initiative will provide new support to help turn around underperforming schools. The education reform package has long-term implications for our children and for the state's economic well-being. The better we prepare children for the 21st Century workforce, the stronger we'll make Connecticut's economy. The bill:

- Includes more funding for school-based health centers and family resource centers.
- Recognizes the critical importance of early childhood education by underwriting an additional 1,000 school readiness slots for preschoolers and funding initiatives to improve early reading success.
- Creates the "Commissioner's Network", to provide the intensive supports and interventions needed to turn around 25 of the most states chronically low-performing schools.
- Gives the state commissioner of education the needed authority to develop or modify plans with teachers and parents at "turnaround" schools.

Let's Keep In Touch In A Green Way

Sign Up For Email Updates:
housedems.ct.gov/hurlburt

Find Us On Facebook:
facebook.com/CTHouseDemocrats